

DPH Encourages Everyone to Know Your HIV Status – “It’s Empowering”

Dover, DE – The Division of Public Health (DPH) is encouraging Delawareans aged 13 to 64 that have not already done so to get a human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) test. Although more than 3,500 people are known to be living with HIV in Delaware, one in ten of those infected don’t know they have the disease. That means that 400 people in Delaware may be infected but are unaware, posing a risk not only to their own health, but also to the health of others as well.

Knowing you are infected means you can seek treatment and protect your own health and the health of your partner. Knowing you are NOT infected means you can take precautions to ensure you remain uninfected.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that everyone between the ages of 13 and 64 get tested for HIV at least once as part of routine health care, and that people with certain risk factors get tested more often. These include but are not limited to people with more than one sex partner, with sexually transmitted infections (STIs), or who inject drugs. Sexually active gay and bisexual men may benefit from even more frequent testing.

“Since most new infections are transmitted by individuals who do not know they are infected, undiagnosed infection remains the main factor fueling the HIV epidemic,” said DPH Director Dr. Karyl Rattay. “Knowing your HIV status is empowering. If you test positive, early medical treatment can lead to a fairly normal life. HIV treatment can reduce the virus in a person’s bloodstream to ‘undetectable’ levels, keeping patients healthy for many years, and greatly reducing the

chance of transmitting the virus to their sex partners.”

DPH also reminds everyone that a person’s negative HIV status expires every time you engage in risky behaviors like unprotected sex or use injectable drugs. Once this happens, you have to repeat the test at least three months after the incident because early exposure may be missed by a test.

Getting tested is easy and quick. Rapid HIV testing kits require only a single finger needle-stick and provide the results in 10 minutes. To find a HIV testing location near you for year-round testing opportunities, visit <http://www.hivtest.org>

Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware’s citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary beverages.